

**INTERVIEW
WITH
JACK ROCKART
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J: Jack Rockart
R: Bob McKersie
A: Alan White

R: Before we get to CISR, which is the basic building block of your career, why don't you tell us when you came to Sloan, and where you ended up, and what was the network there? Who were your colleagues? And why?

J: Why did I come to Sloan? Well, I'd sold computers for IBM for 4-5 years, and then I'd gone overseas to Kenya on an MIT program.

A: Oh, the East Africa program?

J: It was fantastic.

A: I think that program was the first international program of the Sloan School, because it preceded India, right?

J: Yes. We've had a reunion every year.

A: Is that right?

J: We've also funded people to do short periods of what we did. So there's a huge amount of continuing esprit about what Carroll Wilson and what he did not only in terms of who were African Fellows, but also among some other recipients of money about the African fellows enabling research to be continued.

A: Do you know what year it started?

J: Yes, I think we were the second year, and I went over in 1967? I was there from 1962 to 1964. So the first year I think was 1961.

A: OK. Thanks very much. I knew about India; were you involved in India at all?

J: Not at all.

A: Michael Scott Morton was.

J: Well, I was there in Kenya as personal assistant to the Assistant Postmaster General, Finance of the East Africa Postal and Communications Organization. Basically, I was an assistant to the CFO of the Post Office, Postal saving bank and telephone company for Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar. I put in the first ICT master computer north of South Africa. Elise, my wife, put in the first IBM computer north of South Africa. Elise also helped to start a small women's college which became a large women's college, and then merged with a men's college. I could talk all night long about that. I also did financial analysis and served as Africanization Officer – charged with the selection of Africans for promotion. It was not an easy job.

But to your point; my background is computers, technology, etc. Somewhere in the second year I started to ask people, "Where is there a good Ph.D. program in I.T?" and the answer was there were only two, MIT and Carnegie. I figured, "What the hell, I know some people at MIT. I may get in there." I applied to MIT and was accepted.

B: So what year did you enter the Ph.D. program?

J: The fall of 1964. In 1967 I was asked to teach as a lecturer. In 1968 I received my Ph.D., and they asked me to stay, and I stayed.

B: And you were in the Management Science part?

J: I was in Management Science, but we had an IT group as a part of Management Science. At that point, about 4-5 people were in that group. The one who was most memorable was Dave Ness, who was an extremely bright guy. Dave wrote his thesis, looked at it and said “that’s not good enough” and tore it up and threw it away, according to legend. He did that 5 times. He never had a thesis good enough for him. Never got his Ph.D. but got hired by Wharton anyway.

A: And Michael Scott Morton came along later....

J: Michael was at Harvard. I think he graduated a year before I did.

A: So he was doing that accounting/planning/control, as I recall...?

J: Right, of which IS was originally a subset.

B: And physically, where were you? In which building?

J: I was in the Herman Building.

B: And was John the titular head?

J: John was the titular head, and the actual head, and all that. The two professors I came to MIT for had by this time gone to various other places. Shortly after I got my Ph.D., Jim Emery was one....

A: But they were here to chair your committee?

J: Yes, exactly. I’ll never forget. Jim came in one day and said, “You were supposed to have an oral.”

I said, “OH??”

He said, “Yup.”

I said, "Tell me about it. When are we going to do this?"

He said, "How about this afternoon?"

So I spent the morning looking some things up. It was a little easier in those days in our young discipline. The ground rules were not too formal, because we had a small faculty, busier than hell. A question is: why didn't I know those other colleagues well? The answer is: I was married, most of them weren't; I was generally 5 or 10 years older than they were; and we had friends in Boston.

B: So what courses did you teach when you started as a lecturer?

J: They said, "You want to teach computers, right?"

I said, "Right."

They said, "Well, computers are used primarily for data processing, right?"

I said, "Yeah, right."

"So that means accounts payable, payroll, general ledger, etc?"

I said, "Right."

They said, "You ought to teach Economics."

I thought about that a little bit—I think it was Zenon Zenetos or Tom Hill who talked about it, I've forgotten which, and I thought, "You know? Not a bad idea." I took accounting at HBS, by the case method. I didn't learn much accounting. So I figured, "What the dickens, I may as well learn accounting." I did, and I had a wonderful time, to the point where I think I taught it for 4-5 years.

About the end of the third year, I got tired of teaching because all of the material was in great textbooks. I decided to take a textbook and write a little prelim for the students as to what they ought to get out of it. I also wrote a prelim on each chapter about the major things they ought to learn. I added comments to the textbook material to fit my view of the course. Then I said to two sections of students, "Guys, it's up to you. If you want to come in and listen to me talk about the chapter, come on in. If you don't, don't do it. You will take the same test as everybody else, but you don't have to come to class." As a result, I collapsed the two classes into

one, and I had about 40% of the 2 classes that shared each session. I took quick questions first, let the students go who wanted to leave, and then taught the ones who really needed teaching.

Long story short, my sections did very well. You asked me to talk about myself. I won the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) award for the “Innovative Course of the Year.”

However, after 3-4 years of that, and teaching an IT course along with it, Michael I think moved to the Strategy Group. I worked with Michael and Zenon who agreed that it was time I started teaching about computers, and we got agreement. From there on in, I taught information technology courses.

B: Accounting would have been a required course; everybody would have had to take it. But when you got to teaching IT, was that a required course?

J: No, it was not, never.

B: So you were getting people because of the importance of the subject.

J: As you well know, because of the importance of the subject, and because of good professors. Michael was terrific. He taught some, I taught some, and they were popular courses. And slowly but surely we put in some more courses. Stu Madnick, John Donovan taught on the technology side. We built a group. As you probably know, our IT group has been ranked #1 in IT forever and ever in every survey.

A: I think that ranking is, to a great extent, because of CISR.

J: Well, I wouldn't say that myself...but you're probably right. In the mid '80s an associate dean came into my office one day and said, “Jack, I've just come back from a trip talking to 20 companies who are not companies that support the school. The interesting thing about this, of the 20 companies a number of them no knowledge of the Sloan School. Most of them, however, had heard of CISR.” It was a compliment to what we had accomplished in our first ten years or so. You chalk that up as a red-letter day.

The birth of CISR

B: So let's start with CISR. How did it all come about?

J: It all came about at a meeting between Scott Morton and Bill Pounds. I think it was in 1971, but I'm not sure. In talking to Scott Morton about it, he said, "You know, it was Bill's idea to do something like CISR." I think Bill had just come out of an advisory meeting where people had been pushing for IT; they might even have been pushing for more pragmatic stuff; I'm not sure. You'd have to ask Bill about that. But that's my memory; it could well be wrong.

So Michael said it came from Bill; Bill absolutely denies it. He said, "No, no, it just came out of the meeting." Okay, Bill..... [laughing] That's Bill.

At any rate, it took a year or two to develop what this thing was all about. Michael came to me after that meeting; he went to see other people, and slowly but surely a case for CISR was developed. In 1974, Norm Rasmussen was Acting Director of the Center. That was the year the Center was supposed to start. But Michael had gone to Scotland on sabbatical. Norm was asked to take the leadership. He'd been head of Cambridge Scientific Center for IBM for a number of years, a guy with a lot of business experience who sounded like exactly the guy we needed. He came in, but he found it difficult because he had to deal with very independent faculty members who marched to their own drums, not to someone's expectations. My major memory of his year with us was one day when I came out of my office about half-way down the hall in the third floor of E53. There was Rasmussen at one end of a long corridor and John Donovan at the other end, and they were yelling at each other!

1974 – 1967 Early growth and resource development.

In that first year, we actually got a few sponsors. In general, they were people Scott Morton, I, or the dean knew. There weren't many, maybe 3, 4, 5, something like that. Not a bad start. We went to potential sponsors and said essentially, "We're interested in doing three things: First, we're interested in doing real pragmatic research, and we want to do what YOU think ought to be researched, not what we think ought to be researched. In short, we would like to know what's coming down the pike that you guys see happening 2, 3, 4, 5 years from now,

things which you think you'd like to know a lot more about NOW?" We said that was what we wanted to work on.

Second, we said, therefore this is problem-based stuff; it's not theory-based stuff. This is relevant stuff, relevant to you, your organization, and the entire IT business community. We'll be as rigorous in our research as we can be, but relevance comes first.

B: How did you get people to do the research that the sponsors wanted to have done? I asked that question when we interviewed Stew Myers about his financial services. He said "That it was a nightmare for me, because I couldn't find the people to do the research that the companies wanted to do." So how did you close that gap?

J: You're ahead of the story, but let me answer the question now. Very simply, most faculty members do not have enough time, or they are NOT interested in the things that sponsors are interested in. Professors most often have particular areas of research that they want to dig into. Anything outside of these issues is a waste of time for them. A director's first reaction to that situation is to take a look at it and think "Oh my god! I'm going to have to do all the work myself," which I did for a while. Second, "I'm going to have to hire people who really want to do this type of work." My first hire was a woman by the name of Chris Bullen. She had just come through our Master's program. Hiring people like Chris, who were really interested in sponsor's forward looking issues has worked very well. Throughout my entire time, and through Peter Weill's time now, we've had people who are not faculty, in these roles essentially research assistants.

I was often asked by people who wanted to start a CISR what the two critical things were. I said, #1, you have to have a director who really wants to work on pragmatic things that are useful to sponsors, they are after all leading edge issues in the field, and should be very interesting to study. However, this is not a usual role in schools of business. This new role felt a little different, and perhaps not acceptable to everybody in the School. I had people asking me whether we were a consulting firm about the third year when it was obvious that we were beginning to flourish. So that's #1. You don't want to get somebody who wants to do his theoretical research and hope to have some sites to do it on.

Number two, equally important, perhaps more important, hire good people to support the faculty in doing research, or do it themselves if there is no faculty person interested.

The third thing I did was to attempt to get onto the faculty some people whom I knew would like to do this sort of thing... people like John Henderson, Venkat Venkatramen, and Michael Treacy. For a while that made things a lot easier for me. But, their interests were different from other faculty members. Promotion was difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, reluctantly, I turned back to research assistants.

B: When did you take charge? You mentioned Michael Scott Morton went off to Scotland and Rasmussen was there. How did you work your way to the titular title??

J: Michael was in Scotland, Norm asked me to head the first real year of prospecting for sponsors. Clearly he wasn't going to stick around, for lots of reasons. Michael came back and took a new role as Associate Dean. Everybody looked around and said, "Is there anybody else here? How about Rockart?" I took it over in 1975.

1975

In 1975, we brought in a few more sponsors. In 1975, we also did one major thing: we started Summer Session, a week long seminar featuring faculty and their research. For each of our sponsors, we said "you get 2 seats at this summer session. If you really want it badly, I could probably get you a third one, but that's it." We said that is why we were also going to make summer session available to companies outside of CISR. We would do a sponsors' board, for the sponsors alone, which would be two days of deeper insights on what we were doing. This session would also explore what research we planned to do in the future and incorporate sponsor ideas. The first summer session in 1975 had about 70 people. It surprised me that we got that many. We did it in a lecture hall at MIT. We put them up at a hotel in town, and we hired MIT to do the food.

The first day was an interesting day. Comes 8:30 and everybody is supposed to be there? Nobody is there. The buses that were supposed to bring the people from the hotel didn't show up. So, for the next half hour, cabs were coming in, guys were walking in, etc. Around

noon, we were finished with the two morning lectures and lunch was supposed to be out there waiting for us in the tent. Lunch wasn't there. Tent's there, but no lunch. That came about an hour late. Oh, I almost forgot. The hall. This was in June, the hall must have been 75, 78 degrees something like that. Had to call MIT Maintenance and they said, "Well it's not June 15 yet..." So, to make a long story short, the next year we went over to a hotel, and all was much better.

However, toward the end of the week, and despite all this stuff going on, and despite the fact that I had a couple of faculty members whom I was unsure if they ought to be up there. (I did put them up there, but they weren't very good.) I had 6 participants come up and say, "You guys are doing a lot of good stuff. How do I get closer to this?" So I laid out the role of a sponsor, and I can't remember how many actually came on board that year. But that's the way we got sponsors after that. No more cold calls; no more "do you know Joe over at such and such?" We got people who really wanted to be part of this, who understood it having heard us talk. There is nothing so bad as selling a product which the guy who bought it doesn't understand. I did that once as an IBM salesman. It was most difficult. Here we always had people who understood what they were buying.

Throughout the years, we continued, we added new sponsors by people saying they would like to be on the board. Either through summer session, or through another seminar, or through my lecturing to the executive audience. So this was very big in 1975-76.

B: At that time, there really wasn't any other Center, was there, at Sloan, that you could use as an example? There may have been some others at MIT. So the question is: how did you figure out the design?

J: Well, we knew what we wanted to do. We knew it had to be problem-centered, we knew it had to be sponsor-originated stuff. We knew it had to be a problem that was important enough, but not understood, for us to take it. And one that we frankly could write up and put in the various applied journals, like HBR or Sloan Management Review.

After that, we made it up as we went along. Our process of dissemination of knowledge was articles, and seminars of all types became a second one. Summer Session? Hey,

that's a good idea! Let's do it. A two-day seminar on centralization? Let's do it. It might get 20 sponsors, it might get 30; we got 50.

With the success of summer session we experimented with and eventually added several seminars which ran for as little as a day or as long as a week. Almost all were centered a particular problem area and involved practicing managers as well as CISR speakers. For many of them, non-sponsors were also invited and these seminars again served as a sponsor recruiting tool.

A: You see Eric and Glen Urban, their center, which arguably could be a part of CISR.

J: Tom Malone has had a couple of centers. That could be a part of CISR.

A: So why aren't they part of CISR? Is it because they see CISR as more applied?

J: You'd have to ask them, obviously. But my sense is two things: (1) CISR is a different animal. CISR is more field research oriented, which responds to the sponsors. That's one part of it. The second part of it is: "it's not mine." Tom and others wanted to have their own center.

J: There was a funny thing that happened. At a faculty meeting when CISR was really rolling, we had Ph.D. students there, so we went around the room and introduced ourselves. I'm sitting here, and there is somebody here, and Tom Malone is over here. I said, "I'm Jack Rockart, Director of CISR." The next guy says something. Then Tom says, "Tom Malone, Director of CISR."

B: Tom Malone did??

J: We had a laugh over that one. "Yes, Tom, I know you might like to do that..." someone said. I didn't totally plan our path. It was a process of trying new things as they looked to be worthwhile, and we continued to grow. I just had some very good people helping me.

By the end of 1978 we had 13 sponsors. Companies like Alcoa, Martin Marietta, GM, Citibank, Sun, IBM, Honeywell – these were all companies that could afford \$20,000 a year with no trouble at all.

We also, by that time, we had a policy that we would not take as sponsors any government organizations. We changed that later on, and let the IRS in. It was a mistake. We spent too much of our time trying to tell them that what they were doing was impossible – during a huge failure of a huge IRS system. It was a prime example of “You can’t get there from here.”

In research, we were doing things like research on centralization or decentralization of IT assets and people, technology, to put it all into the largest computer you’ve got, which is cheaper for each cycle, and you’ve got a lot of people there, some of whom are pretty skilled. That’s the argument for centralization. The argument for decentralization is that local managers can tell their IT people what they want done, and they will run herd over the IT people to make sure they are not doing what the IT people want to do, but they are doing what the business wants. This was a major issue in those days. I will say it is still a relevant issue. So that was a major piece that we did.

We also had a fellow named Bob Alloway, who was looking at IT people and their career paths. We were looking at office automation. It gives you some sense of what was going on pre-1980. Peter Keen was going research decision support systems.

A: What was Jeannie doing?

J: Jeannie wasn’t there at that time. Jeannie joined us in 1993, a long time after that. In 1978 our focus began to change to from office work to information for management. I walked into the door of one of our sponsors, a company named Macom.

A: They came out of the Senior program.

J: Yes. One of the officers, the President, wanted to see me. Great, he wants to see me! And he said, “Jack, I have a problem. I have 70 reports come to me every month, and none of them have the information I need. What information do I need?”

I said, “Is that a question you are asking me?”

He said, “I know you can’t answer that question. But how do I go about thinking about it?”

I said, “Larry, I don’t know.”

He said, “Well, let me remind you, we are a sponsor of your research center. And we give you \$20,000 a year.”

I said, “I think I have your drift.” To make a long story short – and you may know some of this – I went back about 2 weeks later and said, “Let’s try it this way. What’s critical for you? Given those things that are critical, are you getting the information you need on those things?” It turns out that he had almost no information on his critical issues. That’s one example of having sponsors and getting something that’s important. The notion of critical success factors for understanding information was born.

I’ll give you a second one. I’m skipping ahead on this one. In the early to mid-’90s, we did a 10-week set of lectures for McKinsey. The guy who was my counterpart from McKinsey said, “Jack, I’d really like to have a lecture on architecture.” I said, “Computer architecture?” We’re talking about students who don’t need to know that.

He said, “No, no, systems architecture.” “What applications do you want to do? How do they fit together? Are there bunches....” and all that sort of thing.

To make a long story short, Jeannie was with me at that time, and I said to her, “Why don’t you take care of that?” Well, she is now the world’s foremost expert on architecture, has written a book on it, and thanks to Peter Weill, one of the great lecturers in the field. She’s known for architecture and several other things today.

This notion of having sponsors, and the notion of having to be out there and working on pragmatic stuff—that’s pretty powerful. In 1978, we continued to focus on one-day seminars but we also did some one-week seminars on particular topics.

One other thing happened in the early 1970s: we discovered Endicott House. When we had 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 sponsors, we pulled them into Endicott House, an old mansion which had been given to MIT. What a great place to start a discussion! That living room, after a drink and good dinner.... and then we’d go through interactive lectures the next day.

The 1980s – a flourishing CISR

J: The limited growth period ended, around 1979. In the 1980s, we had a few years of what I call our “mature” stage. We were in full swing. Somewhere in there, I had those 3 guys I was talking about: Henderson, Venkatraman, and Treacy. We had the faculty. I had some great researchers. Dave DeLong with Executive Support; Judith Quillard, who did all our admin stuff, but also did research; Chris Bullen, Deborah Hoffman on end user computers, I can go on and on. We had the best mix one could possibly get of faculty and staff.

 One other thing we promised sponsors was that they could send “Fellows” to come to our place. In the early 1980s, we had Bob Benjamin from Xerox, who was there a lot. He learned a lot and contributed a lot. Bob gave us a couple of ideas that turned into excellent research programs.

A: Are you talking about the Nineties Project?

R: No, but many of our “Fellows” were involved in that too. Gerhart Friedrich, from Digital; Bob Johanson, who was a futurist. All those guys could learn from us, and we could learn important things from them.

 From them it became increasingly clear that the IT focus was moving to information use at all levels. In about 1980, you will remember that the first PC started coming out. I’ll never forget the day the doorbell rang and here’s this guy carrying a big box. He said, “Prof. Rockart?” I wasn’t a professor, but I said yes.

 He said, “I’m from IBM, I’ve got a computer for you.”

 I said, “I don’t think this is a computer.”

 He said, “No, no, this is a personal computer. This is one of the first ones, we’re giving one to you, and a number of the top faculty members throughout the country and Europe.”

 All of a sudden, the world changed. IT became not about data processing, it became about information processing as well as data processing. We had a leg up in that area. We had three legs up. One: Scott Morton had started with decision support systems a long time ago and one way or another, some of that research had been done. I’d done some work on senior managers and their use of executive support systems. Finally, critical success factors. We were poised and ready to move in that field.

This opened up some quite different and terribly interesting research for us. Paul DeVario, who was CIO at Owens Corning, said, “Jack, we’ve given an awful lot of people PCs, so management is asking ‘What are they doing with them?’, ‘Is it worth it or not?’” So one of my researchers went in there and talked to 50 or 100 people who had them. She came back out and said, “For 90% of them, there is no major benefit to the company. There is benefit to the individual, but not to the company. The other 10%? You’re making several times the investment.” There were people who were building models that were making a huge difference. There were people in finance who were doing things faster and better than they could be done on the mainframe.

In another case Bob Benjamin said, “Come on into Xerox. We don’t know what our users need. We don’t know what they are doing. What we do know is the number of computers doing paperwork is going up slowly, and information handling computers are taking off.” We did a very interesting study on 80 users and found out what they were doing, and what they wanted. It was a very valuable piece of research.

A: The other person I was thinking of was Peter Keen.

J: Peter was there in the early days. Peter actually gave our first seminar on the use of information. Peter, of course, wanted to be a professor rather than having to do any teaching. Did you know him? One of the most insightful guys I’ve ever run into.

A: Yes, I thought he was a very impressive guy. He didn’t go on to another university, did he? He went out into practice. However, Jack, when people talk about distinctive people at the School over time – just to name a couple – they name you and your contributions, and they name Peter Senge. I often wonder how you guys feel. You’ve never been a part of the faculty and yet, you’ve had some of the most distinctive contributions. Dave Schmittlein, when he presents his material on what is distinctive about the Sloan School, he mentions you guys. He doesn’t mention a lot of people. But he is talking about what is most distinctive about our School, and he mentions you and your work in CISR.

J: The question is, how do I feel about it? That's an interesting question to answer. I honestly think that it didn't bother me very much. I won't say it didn't bother me at all. I probably thought about it once in a while. But I was doing what I wanted to do, and I was having a helluva good time. I was publishing in *HBR*, *Sloan Management Review*, etc. I was reasonably sure that if you put a list of faculty in front of anybody in business, they would recognize my name.

It didn't really hit me until one time – and again, I'm a little ahead of the story – after we'd done McKinsey, we did J&J, we did a lot of other things. The dean comes in and says to me, "Jack, you've done a lot for this school, what can I do for you?"

A: Was this Bill? Abe? Glen?

J: No. Keep going....

A: Dick Schmalensee?

J: Yes! I said, "Well, you know, give me the professor title. Adjunct, whatever you want to do. That would be nice." He came back to me a couple days after that and said, "I can't do that."

I said, "Well, no sweat. I didn't expect you to be able to."

He said, "How about this? How about we give you the chair that you just brought in?"

I said, "OK, fine." I was a chaired Senior Lecturer until I retired.

So the answer is very simple. I had a wonderful time. I had other universities.... I just kept saying, "no, no, no, this is too good; the students here are too good." That's it.

B: Another way to come at some of the complicated terrain you were just describing, here we have people doing great work, like Venkat and John Henderson. Yet they don't get tenure. These were people who were kind of in your engine room, doing good work. And then for the rest of the faculty to then not appreciate that work, and give them recognition and tenure, must have been very frustrating.

J: As I remember talking to Henderson before he came on, I said, “John, you know the academic game. And the game is not writing for me. The game is that you can do a good bit of that if you want to, but you’ve also got to do the academic thing. Whether the thing is real or not doesn’t matter. I said, “John, here’s what it’s like, and if you come up, you do some stuff for CISR, you do some stuff for the other faculty. You will have the advantages of CISR. We will get you to the right places, the right people, etc.” And about that time, he agreed to come. Michael Treacy, I simply said, “Michael, you know the game better than anybody else around here, you will do great research for CISR, but I don’t think you’re going to stick around here very long.” And he didn’t.

A: Yes, smart, smart guy.

J: Three smartest people I’ve known in my life: Dave Ness, who was my colleague; Michael Treacy; and Peter Keen. Smart in the sense of being able to run through an awful lot of stuff and say, “That’s the point, that’s the real issue.” Now, there may have been other people who were equally bright, but didn’t show it.

My favorite Treacy anecdote? You want that one? I was doing an introductory lecture for new PhD students, and here’s this guy sitting in the back of the room. Whenever I asked a question of the class, there were not many answers, but his hand would go up and he answers. At the end, I go back and said, “I’m Jack Rockart, I assume you are a doctoral student here?”

“Yes.”

“What group are you in?”

“Accounting.”

I said, “Tell me a little bit about yourself,” and he did. Turns out he had a little IT experience. I said, “Michael, you should not be an accountant. You ought to be in a field that’s going like this.” So he joined us but his personal relationships were not up to his academic capabilities. For the next three months, I trailed him around, saying to secretaries: “He really didn’t mean what he said! Honest to God, he really didn’t mean what he said.”

B: Damage control!

J: The other anecdote occurred when he wrote his thesis for me. I said, “Michael, it’s great but you have to listen to these other two guys who are looking at it, who are on your committee.” One of them said, “Michael, take that piece out, you are belittling somebody, and take this one out, it’s wrong.” I talked to Michael the next day and he said, “Hell no! That guy is no good, and this guy on the Committee was wrong. I’m right.”

To make a long story short, comes the day of his oral – you know what an oral is usually like. You have only your committee, guy’s spouse, 2-3 Ph.D. students. This one the room is packed, absolutely packed. Michael starts to talk about what he’s done, hands go up. Criticism start. Whew. At the end of it, I said, “Michael, I hope you’ve learned a lesson today. I feel a bit foolish, but I think most people understand that it takes more than me to get through your hard head. However, you’ve learned a lesson, understand...” He’s matured, I see him from time to time, and he is very successful

B: Where are we, Jack? You were into the 1980s....

A: You said you were at the top, you’d hit your stride...

J: CISR was so damn much fun in those days. It continued in the early 1990s. It became that when I hired Jeannie. I needed a new researcher. I had a fellow who had been a doctoral student of mine and I was all set to hire him. Judith Quillard comes in my office and said, “Jack, you have to talk to this woman.”

I said, “No, no, I’ve made the decision, it’s done.”

She said, “Jack, you HAVE to talk to this woman.”

I said, “Why?”

She said, “For two reasons. One, she’s a woman.”

I thought, “Oh! You’re right on that one.”

“And two, she blew me away,” said Judith.

Well, Jeannie came in, and absolutely blew me away too.

So I thought, “Well, I’ve got to double-check this.” So I called Dale Goodhue, who was one of my doctoral students, whom I knew Jeannie had worked with. I said, “Dale, tell me about Jeannie Ross.”

He said, “It’s very easy, Jack. We were on a 3-person team, we agreed that we wanted to interview 5 people in each of the companies. We named the people by their titles. I went in and I talked to those 5 people, I get a lot of data. A colleague would also go in and get a lot of data. Jeannie would go in and talk to the first person, and he or she would say, ‘You know, Jeannie, this is an interesting subject. Who are you going to see? Oh, you REALLY ought to see.... X, Y, Z.’” Jeannie’s combination of intelligence and personality is very attractive. People want to help her.

A woman by the name of Chris Foglia also joined us in 1993. She’s currently Associate Director where she handles all the administration, etc., and does some other stuff too. But she’s really, really good. She took over for Judith Quillard.

Anyway, here we are, in the early 1990s. At this point, the School wanted to go into doing a lot of executive education and wanted to have some programs they could advertise. We were a major factor and did a series of seminars for McKinsey and Johnson and Johnson. Why McKinsey? Because they were trying to get into the field, they wanted to know what the key issues were. We told them in a week for each seminar each with 10 different groups. We again did 10 different sessions all over the world. The key issue for J & J was centralization vs. decentralization.

A: In your regular seminars your model also included a lot of cross-pollination among the companies, which was very industry specific.

J: No doubt about that. And we were very upfront about that. We said, “Guys, you may learn as much from the person sitting next to you as you do from me up here talking. Take advantage of this.” They did.

Back to executive education, we did J&J, McKinsey, and a bunch of others. I was having a wonderful time. I was teaching, great students. The students were there because their

company really wanted them to be there, wanted them to learn and, since the field was changing, also “audience” was also motivated to learn. Slowly but surely, I began to think that I was getting long in the tooth. So I said, “Jeannie, maybe we ought to shut this thing down, because I can’t think of anybody who could take over CISR....” Henderson could do it, but he’s over at BU right now, and he’s building his center. We mulled that over a little bit and off-hand, a few days later, I said to Judith Quillard, Deborah Hoffman, and the other people, “You know, guys, we may just close CISR down somewhere along the line. We’re not likely to do it for several months, but you might want to be sounding out what’s out there.”

All of a sudden, our research capability went way down, especially with me doing a lot of teaching. We had about one-half a researcher. And with Judith and most of them leaving – Deborah, a full time researcher, in particular, I think – the backup, the support people just weren’t there any more. One day, Jeannie came in to me and said, “What about Peter Weill?”

I said, “Oh my gosh! I never thought of Peter.” He was in Australia at the time, he’s Australian. So we called Peter and I said, “How about it?”

He said, “Well, Jack, give me some time to think about that.”

He took some time to think about it, and the process of getting it through the faculty here was elongated (to say the least)....

A: He was coming in as a Senior Research Scientist.... which is quite a process....

J: Yes, pretty big deal. By that time, we’re nearing 2000 and I’m looking around and thinking, with all the teaching we are doing, “We haven’t done much research for sponsors recently,” and the sponsors were letting us know that. They decreased in numbers. I turned CISR over to Peter, who joined in June 2000.

One thing I forgot to tell you. I had a very strong view that I wanted no more than 25 sponsors. At any one point, that was the number I felt I could handle. In addition, they would get to know each other and share their own insights into operations and management of I.T.

Peter came on and at that point I told him exactly how I did everything, etc. He said, “Jack, good job. But I’m going to do it a little bit differently.”

I said, “Peter, as long as you’re doing the same three things – leading edge, pragmatic research useful to our sponsor companies, run it as you will!”

Peter has carried on with essentially the same format that we had, with a couple of major differences. The same ideas around summer session continues to this day; multiple research seminars; and field-based research. However, Peter is more of a numbers guy than I was or Jeannie is, so he does a lot of survey stuff, but Peter has a full understanding of the field to what is happening in the field so that he can illustrate the findings from the survey.

B: What is Peter's background? How did you know he was a good prospect?

J: Ph.D. from NYU, in IT. At CISR, which I didn't tell you, we had a position for in for half a year. It was clear from his time with us that he had the instinct that we did on effective research.

A: How many sponsors are there now?

J: Are you ready for this number? 80! Peter is married, but no kids. His wife has her own career. He is energetic as all hell. I thought I was a good speaker. He is a better, more engaging lecturer than I was. He's trained Jeannie to the point where she is world-class, also no doubt about it. That "sponsor tightness" that I liked, he's not really that concerned about.

A: Well, he has his own interests; he's got more companies that he's comfortable with this.

J: Exactly. And the other thing he's got 7 Patrons. A Patron is somebody who gives \$100,000 or more a year. He, with Jeanne's contributions, is doing a fantastic job.

Recently CISR hired a Ph.D., ex-McKinsey, from Germany who looks to be very good. He is the third part of the strength of the place. Right now, on a 1 to 10 scale, Peter and Jeannie are 10s, and he is certainly not there yet, but he's got every potential to be a future leader.

Peter has 4 research scientists. Chris Foglia is Associate Director.

In 2008, Peter said, "Jack, we're going to go global."

I said, "Sounds like a great idea!"

He said, “Jeannie is going to be the director, I’m going to be the chairman.”

Jeannie came in afterwards and asked, “Jack, can I do this?”

I said, “Jeannie, you can do that job. If you have any doubts about it, don’t do it.

But I know you can do it. And, she has, extremely well.

A: And Peter works from Australia?

J: He now is in Australia. He’s overseas about half the time, here about half the time. Of the 80 sponsors – ready for this figure? – 40 are now international, so roughly half. We are global. Canada, Australia, Brazil....

A: Here you thought you were about to die out, and you make a great decision about bringing someone in, like Peter, and next thing you know it’s a whole new world.

J: You know the major challenge for a CEO? To pick the right guy to follow him. That’s one test I passed! Lucky? Peter is so good, and Jeannie is so good that in terms of research capability, there are no parallel researchers in their league.

B: Jack, when you were at this critical point in early 2000 – this is a broader question about how the center connects into the leadership of the School. Were there conversations between you and whoever was dean at the time? What’s the governance structure above CISR?

A: Who do you get advice from?

J: I reported to the dean. I saw the dean 3 times in 25 years. I know this does not follow good management practices, but worked. CISR was doing well and did not need much oversight.

B: Well, you came to this critical juncture of ‘maybe we’d better shut down’,

J: I didn't tell that to the dean because I wasn't ready to say that yet. I finally went to the dean and said I had found a guy that I would like to have take over, that it was Peter Weill. We went through that long negotiation. I think it's no different in academia than it is in business. We were making money, or adding to it. I've forgotten how much I gave Peter, but it was in 7 figures. Therefore, on the financial side, we were fine. Reputation, we were fine. The reports were coming out, research was coming out, if more slowly than the past. Everybody was very positive about CISR.

B: OK. This has been fantastic. It's a story that needed to be recorded.

A: When you get the notes, you may want to add we've never had a research center like CISR.

B: Yes, one that thrived.

A: And still does.

J: That's the reason we hired this German guy because Peter and Jeannie are looking for the next generation, and hoping to do it with a little more pre-planning than we did when I turned it over to Peter.

I stay in touch. Although three recent operations have slowed me down. It is a pleasure to see what CISR is doing today.